UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/825/Part III/18
3 August 1994

Original: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-fifth session

UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART III. EUROPE

Section 18 - Other Countries in Western Europe

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03018

III.18 OTHER COUNTRIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

1. This chapter covers UNHCR activities in Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden).

Area Overview

Ireland

2. During 1993, the Irish Government registered 91 asylum applications mainly from citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Of this number, four applicants were granted refugee status, 23 were rejected and six were given permission to stay on humanitarian grounds. At the end of 1993, 67 applications were pending. The number of recognized refugees registered in Ireland at the end of 1993 was 258, most of whom originated from Viet Nam and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3. Ireland has continued to respond favourably to requests for resettlement. In 1993, it accepted a total of 96 individuals, 38 of whom were Vietnamese family reunification cases and 58 of whom were Bosnians received under the government programme. Ireland now hosts some 500 individuals who had arrived from third countries, most of whom have become Irish citizens.

4. In 1993, a recommendation was made by the Interdepartmental Committee of the Department of Justice to introduce legislation relating to asylum in Ireland for the first time. In anticipation of such a bill being introduced, the Minister has established a possibility for interim appeal for rejected asylum applicants and has appointed a senior judge to take charge of appeal matters. The new legislation is expected to come into force in the course of 1994.

5. UNHCR's assistance programme in Ireland is implemented by the Irish Red Cross Society (IRCS) and the Irish Refugee Council (IREFCO) which provide legal advice and assistance to needy asylum-seekers. There were no requests for voluntary repatriation in 1993. However, arrangements were made by the Branch Office in London to transfer repatriation work for the United Kingdom and Ireland to the London office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as of June 1994.

Luxembourg

6. At the end of 1993, Luxembourg's refugee population was estimated at some 3,500 persons. This number includes 225 persons granted refugee status under the 1951 Convention and some 3,000 persons from the former Yugoslavia who were provided with temporary protection.

7. Legislative consultations on the proposed new draft law on asylum continued throughout 1993 and were suspended in early 1994 because of the general election. Deliberations were expected to resume in the second half of 1994.

8. Through the Regional Office in Brussels, UNHCR will continue to provide information and legal advice relevant to the status determination procedure. UNHCR's training activities in Luxembourg will target non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and lawyers active in legal counselling of asylum-seekers and refugees in order to enable them to assume primary responsibility for the protection of individual cases.

9. A number of refugee-related public information events, including round tables and benefit concerts, will be organized within the framework of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. To support such activities, a national committee for UNHCR will be established by the end of 1994.

Malta

10. In 1993, some 900 persons applied for refugee status under UNHCR's Mandate, with the majority originating from Iraq. Of this number, 136 were recognized, which brought the total number of persons allowed to remain in Malta to 505. This figure includes some 350 citizens of the former Yugoslavia who were granted de facto temporary protection by the Maltese authorities.

11. In the first quarter of 1994, 19 asylum-seekers arrived in Malta. The main countries of origin are Somalia, Liberia, and other countries in Africa and in the Middle East.

12. Pending the eventual lifting of Malta's geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, the establishment of an appropriate national eligibility procedure and the possibility of local integration, resettlement options are being explored. At the end of 1993, 142 refugees (138 Iraqis, 3 Egyptians, 1 Palestinian) were awaiting resettlement from Malta.

13. UNHCR continues to provide assistance to refugees recognized under the mandate until a solution can be found. The 1993 care and maintenance programme provided basic food, accommodation and health care to 189 persons, of whom 37 have since departed for resettlement. As of March 1994, the total assisted caseload was 152 persons. The influx of Iraqis in late 1992 necessitated an increase in the 1993 and 1994 budgets in order to provide assistance pending status determination and resettlement to a third country for Mandate refugees. Resettlement is being pursued on an exceptional basis for most Iraqi refugees, while temporary protection is being explored for citizens of the former Yugoslavia and most others.

14. The Emigrants' Commission is UNHCR's operational partner in Malta. The Commission processes and submits asylum requests to the Branch Office for decision, disburses the assistance under the UNHCR project, and mobilizes additional local resources.

Netherlands

15. At the end of 1993, there were 33,224 refugees in the Netherlands. The total number of asylum requests received in 1993 was 35,399, a 100 per cent increase compared to the 1992 figure (17,464 applications). The majority of the asylum-seekers (24,508 persons) originated from seven regions: the former Yugoslavia (9,629), Somalia (4,330), Iraq (3,229), the Islamic Republic of Iran

(2,610), Sri Lanka (1,902), Afghanistan (1,503) and Zaire (1,305). About one third of asylum-seekers are female and some 23 per cent of the total are minors under the age of 15.

16. In 1993, 42,706 decisions were taken by the Dutch Government, of which 10,338 applicants were granted refugee status. The increased acceptance rate of 25 per cent, 6 per cent more than in the previous year, is primarily based on the fact that Bosnian asylum-seekers were recognized. A total of 4,674 persons were given residence status on humanitarian grounds.

17. Throughout 1993, the asylum debate focused on the adoption of the amended Aliens Law, on which UNHCR was also invited to comment. The law, which entered into force on 1 January 1994, introduced measures aimed at streamlining the procedure and filtering out manifestly unfounded claims at an early stage. The new law foresees, inter alia, the imposition of carrier sanctions, the establishment of a temporary protection regime for victims of civil war and a simplification of the appeals procedure.

18. UNHCR has no assistance programme in the Netherlands. Assistance is provided to asylum-seekers and refugees by a national network which consists of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, provincial and municipal authorities, and local NGOs.

19. Several training programmes have been organized at the initiative of, or in cooperation with, the Netherlands authorities. In June 1993, four training sessions were organized by the Royal Maréchaussée for the border police at Schiphol Airport and 64 officers received training through the combined efforts of the Ministry of Justice, three NGOs and UNHCR. In December, an agreement was entered into with the Clingendael Institute of International Relations allowing for UNHCR participation in the training of Dutch army officers who serve in United Nations peace-keeping missions. Eleven sessions are planned for 1994. Training programmes at the Defence Academy (Defensie Leergangen) and other institutions have been proceeding as planned.

Nordic Countries

20. At 31 December 1993, the five Nordic countries hosted a refugee population of some 335,000 persons, the vast majority of whom lived in Sweden (257,000), followed by Denmark (42,200), Norway (26,600), Finland (9,000) and Iceland (160). The total number of asylum-seekers arriving in 1993 was 66,800, the majority of whom came from former Yugoslavia. A total of 8,373 asylum-seekers arrived in the first quarter of 1994, compared to 19,566 in 1993. (Details are provided below under each country heading). The trend of fewer asylum-seekers arriving in Nordic countries in the second half of 1993 and the first quarter of 1994 is expected to continue throughout 1994.

21. The imposition of visa requirements for asylum-seekers from the former Yugoslavia caused a significant decrease in arrivals. Furthermore, Sweden and Norway took the decision in 1993 to return Kosovo Albanians whose applications had been rejected.

22. The issue of the adoption of new comprehensive refugee policies was discussed in all Nordic countries, particularly in Norway and Sweden.

23. In 1994 and 1995, the Regional Office in Stockholm will continue to promote the development of new refugee policies consistent with international protection standards, particularly the concept of temporary protection and its application in the Nordic context. UNHCR will continue to provide advice and refugee law training to government officials, lawyers and NGOs, and expand its public information activities. In line with UNHCR's policy in Western Europe, individual casework will be transferred to competent NGOs unless this has already been done. Assistance, as well as social and legal counselling to asylum-seekers and refugees is provided by Governments and NGOs throughout the region. In Sweden, the country with the largest caseload, UNHCR is still required to address a large number of queries and consequently cooperation mechanisms still have to be further developed and strengthened.

24. In 1993, the Nordic countries contributed 21 per cent of UNHCR's total budget. The Regional Office in Stockholm will endeavour to maintain this level of support. In addition, private sector fund raising activities, initially in Iceland, Finland and Denmark, will be explored.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

25. The activities necessary to attain the programme objectives mentioned above will be carried out by the Regional Office in close cooperation with a large number of government and NGO partners in the eight countries covered by the Regional Office. The proposed legal counselling to be implemented in Sweden in 1995 through two local NGOs will make it possible for the Regional Office to reduce its involvement in individual case management and to allocate more of its own staff resources to policy issues and external relations.

Denmark

26. At the end of 1993, there were 42,248 refugees in Denmark. During 1993, 14,347 asylum-seekers arrived in Denmark, representing a 3 per cent increase compared to 1992, when 13,884 asylum applications were filed. In 1993, refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina were given temporary permits in anticipation of a possible return to their country of origin. In view of the refugees' prolonged stay in Denmark, the Government has decided that they will be allowed to enter the normal asylum procedure after two years.

Finland

27. There were a total of 8,952 refugees in Finland at the end of 1993. A total of 2,023 asylum-seekers arrived during the year, compared to 3,634 in 1992.

28. Discussions in Finland focused on the safe country concept in relation to other countries in the region. In January 1994 the Finnish Government decided to consider the Russian Federation and the Baltic States as safe for their own citizens. Particular attention was also given to developing cooperation with Finnish and Russian authorities responsible for refugee and migration matters.

Iceland

29. At the end of 1993, the refugee population remained in the region of 160, the same as in 1992.

30. The Parliament appointed a committee to conduct a thorough review of Iceland's refugee policy. It is hoped that, as is the case in other Nordic countries, the Government will propose the introduction of a yearly refugee quota in order to strengthen Iceland's involvement in refugee matters.

Norway

31. At the end of 1993, there were 26,607 refugees in Norway. A total of 12,876 asylum-seekers arrived in Norway in 1993 as compared to 5,238 asylum-seekers in 1992. The increase was mainly due to the arrival of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Norwegian Government introduced a visa requirement for citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1993, following a very sharp increase in arrivals in the third quarter of 1993.

32. The debate in Norway focused on Kosovo Albanian asylum-seekers, most of whom had arrived from Sweden after having received a negative decision. Some 500 of these rejected asylum-seekers were provided shelter in churches until the Government decided to review cases a second time.

33. In June 1994, Norway hosted the global UNHCR-NGO Partnership Action (PARINAC) Conference, which gathered NGOs from around the world dealing with refugee and asylum issues.

Sweden

34. Sweden's refugee population stood at 257,045 at the end of 1993. A total of 37,581 asylum-seekers arrived in Sweden in 1993, most of whom originated from the former Yugoslavia (28,800).

35. In a landmark decision of 21 June 1993, the Swedish Government decided to grant permanent residence permits on humanitarian grounds to asylum-seekers from Bosnia and Herzegovina who had previously not been considered eligible for refugee status. Some 40,000 asylum-seekers are expected to benefit from this decision.

36. Arrivals from Bosnia and Herzegovina dropped sharply after the introduction of visa requirements in mid-1993. Subsequently, the Parliament introduced a special quota of 6,000 refugees, as a compensatory measure, in addition to the initial quota of 1,800, for the year 1993/1994. The Swedish Government was also very active in trying to promote European burden-sharing in relation to the refugee problems created by the continuing war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

37. In 1993, the Swedish Government began to implement a scheme to return rejected Kosovo Albanian asylum-seekers to Kosovo following an individual determination procedure. Some of the rejected asylum-seekers travelled to Norway and other countries in the region to avoid forcible return to Kosovo.

38. On 4 April 1994 the Swedish Government passed a decree which allows children and families with children who had applied for asylum before 1 January 1993 to stay in Sweden on humanitarian grounds, which included families whose asylum application had been rejected. In practice, this decree entails that some 20,000 persons, many of whom are Albanians from Kosovo, will be allowed to stay in Sweden.

39. In view of the arrival of relatively large numbers of asylum-seekers in Sweden and the need to support effective NGO involvement for legal counselling and family reunification, it is proposed to provide support to two local NGOs with the required competence.

Portugal

40. At 31 December 1993 Portugal hosted a recognized refugee population of some 600 individuals originating primarily from African Portuguese-speaking countries (i.e. Angola, Sao Tomé and Mozambique), as well as from Zaire, Nigeria, Liberia and Togo.

41. In 1993, some 2,090 new asylum-seekers arrived in Portugal, compared to 688 arrivals in 1992. They came mainly from Romania (1,288), Angola (462), Zaire (98), Bulgaria (25), India (23) and Liberia (23).

42. UNHCR will continue in 1994 and 1995 to monitor the implementation of the new Law on Asylum, which entered into force on 29 October 1993, with a view to ensuring access to the procedure and adherence to internationally accepted standards with regard to asylum-seekers and refugees.

43. As in the previous year in 1994, UNHCR will launch a Christmas poster campaign in collaboration with several banks aimed at collecting funds from the private sector.

44. Until the summer of 1993, the Santa Casa da Misericordia, a public welfare institution, provided assistance to new arrivals. Since that time, UNHCR's programme to provide food and accommodation to asylum-seekers for a maximum of ten days following arrival in Portugal has been the only assistance available to asylum-seekers upon their arrival.

45. Economic assistance can be obtained from the Government during the eligibility process by asylum-seekers who receive Temporary Residence Permits (TRPs). However, TRPs are issued only to asylum-seekers whose applications are considered not to be "manifestly unfounded" and are processed through the normal procedure. It should be noted that over the past two years, all applications for asylum have been systematically processed through accelerated procedures, thereby preventing any asylum-seeker from benefiting from government assistance. UNHCR has discussed this matter with the Government, but a satisfactory solution is yet to be found.

46. Programmes in Portugal are implemented in part by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, in part by the UNHCR Office in Lisbon, and in part by the Portuguese Refugee Council, a newly-created NGO. Basic material assistance will be provided to recognized refugees who, due to their vulnerable state, have not achieved self-reliance. The beneficiary population will consist primarily of

single women, with or without children, and elderly and disabled persons. Their number is not expected to vary considerably from that of 1993 and has been estimated at 101 individuals. Legal and social counselling services will continue to be provided to refugees and asylum-seekers on the basis of individual needs. Recognized refugees who request UNHCR assistance to repatriate will be helped to do so on a case-by-case basis.

47. Due to the sharp increase in arrivals, the allocations for the local settlement programme in 1994 and 1995 are higher than in 1993. The project will cover temporary basic material assistance and counselling services to some 1,800 asylum-seekers expected to enter Portugal.

Switzerland

48. At 31 December 1993, Switzerland hosted 27,913 refugees, compared to 26,736 in 1992. A total of 24,739 persons (8,332 women and 16,407 men) submitted an asylum requests in 1993, which represents an increase of 38 per cent compared to 1992 (17,960). The increase is primarily due to arrivals from the former Yugoslavia. The most widely represented nationalities are Bosnians (27.8 per cent), other persons from the former Yugoslavia (21.2 per cent), Somalis (9.3 per cent), Albanians (8.1 per cent), Sri Lankans (7 per cent), and Turks (4.4 per cent). Some 4,953 persons were granted refugee status (as opposed to 1,730 in 1992). In addition, Switzerland granted temporary admission to 9,567 persons, including 2,239 persons who were admitted under various decisions of the Federal Council in favour of persons from the former Yugoslavia. A total of 928 persons were granted a humanitarian residence permit. During the first four months of 1994, the total number of new asylum-seekers decreased by 38 per cent compared to the same period in 1993. This is due essentially to an important decrease in arrivals from Somalia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, while the number of asylum-seekers from Angola, Bangladesh and Algeria is increasing.

49. The assistance provided under the UNHCR programme covers mainly legal aid and counselling, with limited assistance to refugees on an ad hoc or emergency basis when needs cannot be met from other sources. As in 1992, this programme is implemented by the Swiss section of International Social Service (ISS) and the Office Suisse d'Aide aux Réfugiés (OSAR). The emphasis in the coming years will be on network building and legal training of NGOs to strengthen their capacity to provide legal advice to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

50. Expenditure during the year was generally within the revised estimate. With no allocation for assistance programmes in Luxembourg, the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, expenditure incurred in these countries related solely to staff costs and general operating expenses associated with a UNHCR presence. In the Regional Office in Stockholm and at the offices in the Netherlands and Portugal, expenditure was incurred for salaries and related costs, replacement of essential office equipment and old furniture. Training activities related mainly to regional protection and refugee law seminars involving field and Headquarters staff.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

51. The 1994 revised budget is similar to the initial budget. No changes are expected in the number and level of posts and any additional needs should be met from available resources. Office operating expenses have also been budgeted at a similar level to the initial budget with requirements for Sweden including costs associated with its role as Regional Office for the Nordic and Baltic countries.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

52. No staff changes are foreseen in Western Europe in 1995. The slight increase in administrative expenditure in certain locations takes into account expected increases in utility costs and the replacement of outdated office equipment.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994			1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION		SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)					
				CARE AND MAINTENANCE	
141.2	51.5	298.5	Malta		169.2
7.3 a/	–	–	Sweden		–
204.0	–	338.6	Other countries		–
				VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	
6.6 a/	–	–	Portugal		–
3.1 a/	–	–	Switzerland		–
				LOCAL SETTLEMENT	
24.6	28.7	29.1	Ireland		36.3
630.2 b/	614.6	533.6	Portugal		529.6
805.2 c/	317.9	–	Sweden		100.0
–	658.4	667.2	Switzerland		676.2
				RESETTLEMENT	
0.6 a/	–	–	Malta		–
1.3 a/	–	–	Sweden		–
				PROGRAMME DELIVERY	
–	–	189.1	Netherlands	See Annexes I a and II a	194.2
–	–	122.0	Portugal	See Annexes I a and II a	121.6
–	–	906.5	Sweden	See Annexes I a and II a	911.9
–	–	48.6	Training	See Annexes I a and II a	48.6
1,824.1	1,671.1	3,133.2		SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	2,787.6
				ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	
199.7	186.6	–	Netherlands	See Annexes I b and II b	–
–	–	34.6	Portugal	See Annexes I b and II b	34.1
603.6	619.7	103.0	Sweden	See Annexes I b and II b	97.6
116.9	90.1	63.5	Training	See Annexes I b and II b	63.5
2,744.3	**2,567.5**	**3,334.3**		**TOTAL (1)**	**2,982.8**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)					
				EDUCATION ACCOUNT	
14.7	–	–	Switzerland		–
				PROGRAMME DELIVERY	
–	–	241.4	Training	See Annexes I a and II a	241.4
14.7	**0.0**	**241.4**		**TOTAL (2)**	**241.4**
2,759.0	**2,567.5**	**3,575.7**		**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**3,224.2**

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation
b/ of which US$ 917 incurred against the Overall Allocation
c/ of which US$ 9,685 incurred against the Overall Allocation